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## General Notes.

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### GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVELS.

**The Grand Falls of Labrador.**—For many years vague reports of a great waterfall in Labrador near the head waters of the Grand River have induced men to explore the interior plateau of this region, but no satisfactory account has been given of the appearance of the “Falls” until the recent publication of the results of an exploration undertaken by Mr. Henry G. Bryant of Philadelphia to verify the reports as to the height and location of this natural wonder.

In company with Prof. Kenaston of Washington, D. C., Mr. Bryant arrived at Rigolet in Hamilton Inlet, July 23d, where they embarked on a small schooner which carried them to the head of the interior basin known as Melville or Grosswater Bay. Here Mr. Bryant tried for Indian coöperation in his enterprise but could not overcome their superstitious fears. They firmly believe that death will soon overtake the venturesome mortal who dares to look upon the mysterious cataract. The party that finally started up the Grand River on August 3d consisted of Mr. Bryant, Prof. Kenaston, John Montague, a young Scotchman, and Geoffrey Ban, a full-blood Eskimo. The trip was made in a strong river boat eighteen feet in length and they took with them a canoe for use in the upper reaches of the river. By noon of the second day the party reached Muskrat Falls, where a chain of hills encroaches the bed of the river, contracting the channel and presenting a rocky bulwark, through which the stream has forced its course. The drop of the falls was ascertained to be thirty-six feet. Here was necessitated the first carry, a tedious operation which occupied a day and a half. The subsequent advance of about 175 miles up the river was by the method known as “tracking.” That is, a rope was tied to the gun-wale just aft the bow. To the shore end broad leather straps were attached. This constituted a harness for three of the men who tugged away along the rocky back while the fourth man, by means of an oar lashed to the stern, steered a devious course among the rocks and shallows of the river. Sandy banks and glacial boulders insecurely lodged afforded a precarious footing for the “team,” and stretches of rugged cliffs exercised their ingenuity in making progress. Wading in the water was often the only resource.

On the fourth day Porcupine Rapids was reached, a distance of fifty-seven miles from the mouth of the river. Here was a notable increase in the size of the firs and spruces. Deposits of magnetic iron ore were observed on the banks of the river. The next day the travellers passed through a widening of the river known as Gull Lake. This is a favorite resort of the Canada goose and its waters contain large numbers of white-fish, pickerel and suckers. Above the lake the valley of the river contracts gradually; the sandy terraces disappear, and sloping banks, strewn with erratics, are encountered for many miles. The Gull Island, Horseshoe, Minnapi and Mouni Rapids were conquered in turn. In the swollen condition of the river, the struggle with these wild rapids was long and stubborn. Mouni Rapids extend over a longer distance than any of the others, and aneroid readings show a greater drop here in the bed of the river than at any other point. It was here that the travellers met with an awkward adventure, which Mr. Bryant relates in the following graphic manner.

"We were approaching a rocky point past which the water dashed with angry violence. It was our custom on reaching such a place to first detach the canoe, and then shove out the boat obliquely from the still water to allow her bow to fairly meet the swifter current. On this occasion, while Montague and I, facing up stream were waiting on the bank above for the signal to advance, the boat, through some carelessness, was pushed out from the quiet eddy squarely into the swift water. The full force of the torrent struck her abeam, and away she swept down the stream like a thing possessed. Taken unawares, no time was given to throw off the leather straps from our shoulders, and instantly we were thrown from our feet and dragged over the rocks into the river by the merciless strength of the flood. Most fortunately for me, the circular strap slipped over my head as I was being dragged through the water. Montague's also released itself, and the runaway sped down stream a quarter of a mile before it was stopped. On clambering up the bank I found Montague stunned and bleeding from a scalp wound. Aside from some abrasions of the skin, I was none the worse for my shaking up, and after a brief delay Montague revived and we resumed our 'tow-path' exercise."

Lake Wanakopow was reached August 20th. This romantic sheet of water, less than a mile in width but 35 miles in length, is surrounded by low mountains of granite and gneiss, from whose cliffs and wooded headlands cascades leap into the lake, their silvery outlines contrasting with the environment of dark evergreen foliage. A sounding taken near the middle shows a depth of four hundred and six feet. Mr.

Bryant considers this narrow elevated basin to be of glacial origin, the presence of great numbers of boulders and the rounded appearance of the hill summits pointing to a period of ice movement.

The middle of Lake Wanakopow marks the limit of Mr. Holme's exploration. On his map he places the Grand Falls thirty miles above the head of the lake, with the river entering the lake from the west. Mr. Bryant found, however, that the river enters from the southwest, and the distance from the lake to the rapids below the fall is fifty-three miles.

Finding it impossible to draw the boat through the wide shallow rapids which they afterwards found extended for twenty-five miles before the fall, the explorers resolved to find an old trail they had heard of from a reliable Indian at the Northwest River Post, which leads from this point on the river through a chain of lakes on the tableland, thence to the waters of the Grand River some miles above the Grand Falls. The plan was to follow the old trail for several days then leave it and strike across country in the direction of the river.

A search of three days for the trail was at last successful and the party advanced across five lakes and four "carries." At the north-western extremity of the sixth lake they left the trail and prepared for the tramp across country, which, according to Mr. Bryant, is of the most desolate character. It is undulating, sparsely covered with stunted spruce trees, Labrador tea-plants, blue-berry bushes, etc., among which great weather-worn rocks gleam, while on all sides white patches of caribou moss give a snowy effect to the scene. Shallow lakes reflect the fleeting clouds, their banks lined with boulders, and presenting a labyrinth of channels and island passages. Low hills rise at intervals, but the general effect of the landscape is that of flatness and monotony. No living thing was encountered. Just before sunset a column of mist rising like smoke against the western sky proved the accuracy of their reckoning, but it was impossible to reach the river that night.

The next day, Sept. 2d, after a rough march over rocks and bogs, they emerged from the forest near the spot where the river plunged into the chasm with a deafening roar. The following description by Mr. Bryant is so vivid that we cannot refrain from quoting it entire.

"Standing at the rocky brink of the chasm, a wild and tumultuous scene lay before us, a scene possessing elements of sublimity and with details not to be apprehended in the first moments of wondering contemplation. Far up stream one beheld the surging, fleecy waters and tempestuous billows, dashing high their crests of foam, all forced onward with resistless power towards the steep rock, whence they took their wild leap

into the deep pool below. Turning to the very brink and looking over, we gazed into a world of mists and mighty reverberations. Here the exquisite colors of the rainbow fascinated the eye, and majestic sounds of falling waters continued the pean of the ages. Below and beyond the seething caldron the river appeared, pursuing its turbulent career, past frowning cliffs and over miles of rapids, where it heard 'no sound save its own dashings'. The babel of waters made conversation a matter of difficulty, and after a mute exchange of congratulations, we turned our attention to examining the river in detail above and below the Falls."

"A mile above the main leap, the river is a noble stream four hundred yards wide, already flowing at an accelerated speed. Four rapids, marking successive depressions in the river bed, intervene between this point and the Falls. At the first rapid the width of the stream is not more than one hundred and seventy-five yards, and from thence rapidly contracts until reaching a point above the escarpment proper, where the entire column of fleecy water is compressed within rocky banks not more than fifty yards apart. Here the resistless power is extremely fine. The maddened waters sweeping downwards with terrific force, rise in great surging billows high above the encompassing banks ere they finally hurl themselves into the gulf below. A great pillar of mist rises from the spot, and numerous rainbows span the watery abyss, constantly forming and disappearing amid the clouds of spray. An immense volume of water precipitates itself over the rocky ledge, and under favorable conditions the roar of the cataract can be heard for twenty miles. Below the falls, the river turning to the southeast, pursues its way for twenty-five miles shut in by vertical cliffs of gneissic rock which rise in places to a height of four hundred feet. The rocky banks above and below the falls are thickly wooded with firs and spruces, among which the graceful form of the white birch appears in places."

Attempts to secure photographs of the falls did not meet with success, it was difficult to obtain a good point of view, and, besides, a combination of poor light and mist from the falls cause a lack of definition in the photographs.

Prof. Kenaston found by measurement that the height of the main fall is 316 feet and the vertical height of the chute is 32 feet; making the total descent from the head of the chute to the surface of the water in the chasm about 348 feet. The Grand Falls are then nearly twice as high as Niagara, and are only inferior to that cataract in breadth and volume of water.

The appearance of the sides of the gorge below the falls and the zigzag line of the river suggests that the falls have receded from the edge of the plateau to their present position, a distance of twenty-five miles. If it has taken six thousand years to cut the Niagara gorge where the water acts on a soft shale rock supporting a stratum of limestone, what an immensity of time is involved in assuming that the Grand River Cañon has had a similar history when it is remembered that the escarpment of the Labrador Falls is of hard gneissic rock.

Among the results obtained by the expedition are the measurement of the height of the Grand Falls; the determination of the altitude of the table-land of southeastern Labrador; map of the lower course of the Grand River, from compass survey; meteorological observations extending over the six weeks of the journey; botanical collections illustrating Labrador flora; ethnological collections illustrating life and customs of mountaineer Indians and Eskimos. (Bull. Geog. Club vol. I, no. 2, 1894.)